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Item 133 of the preliminary list*
Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors

Second report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the accounts of the United Nations for the biennium ended 31 December 1999

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 52/212 B of 31 March 1998, the General Assembly accepted the recommendation of the Board of Auditors contained in the annex to the note by the Secretary-General (A/52/753), that progress reports should be submitted to the General Assembly on an annual basis on measures taken or to be taken in response to the recommendations of the Board of Auditors.

2. The present report has been prepared in accordance with that recommendation. Information is provided on measures taken or to be taken to implement those recommendations contained in the report of the Board of Auditors for the financial period ended 31 December 1999[1] that were reported as not fully implemented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/380) of 13 September 2000.

3. In preparing the present report, account was also taken of the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 49/216 A of 23 December 1994, in particular paragraphs 9 and 10; 49/216 B, paragraphs 3 and 4; 49/216 C, paragraph 3; 50/204 A of 23 December 1995, paragraph 4; 51/225 of 3 April 1997, section A, paragraph 10; and 52/212 B of 31 March 1998, paragraphs 3-5.

II. Implementation of recommendations contained in paragraph 12 of the report of the Board of Auditors

4. In paragraph 12 (a) of the report of the Board of Auditors on the accounts of the United Nations for the biennium ended 31 December 1999,[1] the Board recommended that clear guidelines be established to determine the circumstances under which advances may be made by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs from the unearmarked Disaster Relief Assistance Fund, the eligibility of recipients, the maximum level of advances and the period of repayment. The Board also recommended that action be taken to recover long-outstanding advances.

5. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations

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of the Board (A/55/380), a financial task force has been established within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to monitor, on a regular basis, the status of the unearmarked account, review requests for unearmarked funds and make recommendations on the allocations of such funds on the basis of established criteria. In that context, the task force also reviews outstanding advances made from the Disaster Relief Trust Fund and recommends action to be taken to recover long-outstanding advances. The task force is also undertaking an overall review of the policy on the utilization of unearmarked funds and should be in a position to formulate final guidelines in the near future. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs is responsible for implementation of the recommendation.

6. In paragraph 12 (b), the Board recommended that efforts be strengthened to collect accounts receivable, particularly the amount of $25 million outstanding beyond one year.

7. The Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts has been aggressively pursuing the recovery of all receivables, especially those outstanding for more than one year. It should be noted that of the $25 million outstanding for more than one year at 31 December 1999, $16.6 million represents the unpaid contribution receivable from the Government of China, which has been held in a special receivable account pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3049 C (XXVII). As at 31 December 2000, account receivables outstanding for more than one year were $4.45 million compared to the balance of $5.43 million outstanding as at 31 December 1999, which excludes the $16.6 million referred to above. The Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts is responsible for implementation of the recommendation.

8. In paragraph 12 (c), the Board recommended that a consolidated database be implemented fully to facilitate the preparation of consolidated financial statements and to reduce the reliance on ad hoc reports, and that the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts ensure that all adjustments made in the preparation of the financial statements are approved and supported by an adequate audit trail.

9. The Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) team and the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts agreed with the approach for consolidation of the accounts for 2000. This was deployed for the accounts of the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), where IMIS Release 3 was implemented. The individual databases were used as the source of entries in the United Nations Headquarters database. In parallel, users in the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts were given access to copies of the offices away from Headquarters databases. Access to the consolidated extracts database was initiated for certain users and will be made fully operational in 2001. Users have also been granted direct remote access to the offices away from Headquarters databases in the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna, ESCWA and ECLAC. Access to ECA is awaited, pending the installation of a satellite communications link.

10. Once all offices away from Headquarters have implemented Release 3 and all requirements can be finalized, the scripts with modifications, as needed, will be used as a basis to develop an automated process that will query the consolidated database and generate the entries in the database used for preparing the financial statements. Further work is envisaged at that time to determine the precise modalities of the process. While the present solutions are interim measures, a consolidated database of the system remains the ultimate goal from which financial statements can be prepared.

11. The receivable/payable offset report has been enhanced to include the net receivable and payable balances. This enhancement enables the Accounts Division to process accounting entries for statement purposes which will reflect accounting balances in line with those reported in the financial statements for 31 December 2000. The Assistant Secretaries-General for Central Support Services and Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts are responsible for implementation of the recommendation.

12. In paragraph 12 (d), the Board recommended that an archiving facility be developed for IMIS as a matter of priority.

13. The IMIS team has conducted interviews with representatives of relevant offices on the requirements

for archiving. The priority indicated by the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts is first to develop batch processes for period closing and for establishing account balances, as a prerequisite to the actual archiving process. Work is to commence in April 2001 on defining the scope and specific requirements for those batch processes. The Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

14. In paragraph 12 (e), the Board recommended that all outstanding test problem reports and system enhancement requests be reviewed and a comprehensive plan of action be drawn up to resolve the underlying issues.

15. Detailed reports of outstanding technical problem reports and system enhancement requests were provided to the Finance Substantive Interest Group (SIG) in October 2000. An initial review had been conducted by the IMIS finance team of nearly 500 open items, but input from the user community through the SIG is required to determine the relevance and priority of many items. The IMIS team is waiting for comments on the part of the users. The Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

16. In paragraph 12 (g), the Board recommended that the Procurement Division ensure that all new contracts in excess of $200,000 that are not identical to previous contracts be submitted to the Office of Legal Affairs for review before finalization and that the Office make every effort to carry out an effective review of new contracts in excess of $200,000, in accordance with the provisions of the Procurement Manual.

17. This recommendation continues to be implemented. New contracts that are substantially different from other models or previous contracts are submitted by the Procurement Division to the Office of Legal Affairs for review. It should be noted that the Office of Legal Affairs convenes meetings on a regular basis with the Procurement Division and other interested offices to discuss upcoming contracts, with a view to carrying out their effective review by the Office of Legal Affairs within agreed timeframes. The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services are responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

18. In paragraph 12 (h), the Board recommended closer coordination between the General Legal Division and the Procurement Division in contract preparation and approval. In addition, a system for monitoring the status of requests for contract preparation and subsequent action should be established by the Procurement Division.

19. The Procurement Division and the General Legal Division regularly hold meetings to review the work programme and the status of procurement exercises requiring legal assistance. The Office of Legal Affairs and the Procurement Division are continuing to discuss ways to improve their coordination with respect to the preparation and execution of contracts with outside counsel. The Procurement Division has already developed a tracking system for requisitions and has posted the system on its Intranet home page, so that both the Procurement Division and the requisitioning office can track the status of requisitions. The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services are responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

20. In paragraph 12 (i), the Board recommended that the method of setting legal fee caps be reviewed with a view to strengthening control over the level of expenditure incurred for outside legal counsel.

21. This recommendation continues to be implemented as described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/380). The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

22. In paragraph 12 (j), the Board recommended that the Administration ensure, through the Office of Legal Affairs, that payments made to outside counsel not be requested before contracts and amendments are properly concluded and that the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts ensure that payments to outside counsel are made only on the basis of valid contracts that have been signed by all parties.

23. The Office of Legal Affairs ensures that its payment requests are only made on the basis of a fully executed contract. Payments on invoices are made only on certified invoices against valid obligating documents. However, in order to ensure compliance with this recommendation, the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts sent a memorandum in March 2001 to the Office of Legal Affairs, with a copy

to the Procurement Division, advising that payments to outside counsel will be made only upon receipt of a valid contract duly signed by all parties. Instructions are also being issued to finance staff at Headquarters and to finance officers at offices away from Headquarters to ensure that all payments are in compliance with this recommendation. The Controller and the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs are responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

24. In paragraph 12 (k), the Board recommended that the Administration clearly segregate functions in the Office of Legal Affairs to ensure the operation of sound internal checks in the selection and recommendation of appointments, the proposal of contracts and requests of payment for services rendered by outside legal counsel.

25. The Office of Legal Affairs has implemented additional measures to achieve a further segregation of functions with regard to the selection of and contracting with outside counsel, as well as the selection of arbitrators. On 10 January 2001, the Legal Counsel issued an "Internal Instruction concerning selection and engagement of outside counsel and selection and appointment of party-appointed arbitrators and related issues". The Instruction is binding on all staff of OLA. It sets forth specific procedures regarding the short-listing and selection of outside counsel; it also includes specific provisions regarding the review of invoices submitted by outside counsel for services performed during their engagement. The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

26. In paragraph 12 (l), the Board recommended that a strategy be drawn up for the management of the United Nations accommodation in Geneva, which should include formal objectives that are specific and measurable.

27. A request for proposals will be launched in the course of 2001 to undertake a study on the conditions of essential building structures and systems, and hire a consultancy firm accordingly. The Director, Division of Administration, United Nations Office at Geneva is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

28. In paragraph 12 (m), the Board recommended that a system of periodic claims audit be established at the offices of the insurance companies so that the Administration has some reassurance that the claims are correct and representative of the actual charges made for medical care.

29. Owing largely to the heavy work effort required in order to ensure the full implementation of IMIS Release 4 in January 2001, finalization of the scope of work/terms of reference for a claims audit was somewhat delayed. This exercise is now at the point of completion and, as a result, it is anticipated that the request for proposal can be prepared for issuance shortly to appropriate firms of consulting auditors. The Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

30. In paragraph 12 (n), the Board recommended that an inventory of the stock of the United Nations news-stand be conducted jointly with the news-stand contractor at the earliest opportunity.

31. In connection with the conclusion of the former contract for the operation of the news-stand, the Commercial Activities Service advised the contractor, both in writing and verbally, that there was a requirement for incoming and outgoing stock inventory before expiration of the contract on 31 December 2000. No response was made to those requests. It must be observed, however, that since the inventory is owned by the contractor, the United Nations does not have a direct interest in inventory overages or shortfalls. Such an interest did exist at the inception of the former contract in April 1989, when an inventory should have taken place, but it would not be possible to reconstruct a meaningful analysis of stocks dated back to that time. The Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

III. Implementation of recommendations contained in the body of the report

32. In paragraph 21 of its report, the Board recommended that certifying officers ensure that funds are available before approving expenditures on trust funds and that budget officers closely monitor trust funds to ensure that expenditures are within approved allotments.

33. Implementation of this recommendation is ongoing, as budget officers follow up with their client offices during the course of budget implementation. Additionally, as IMIS Release 3 is progressively implemented at duty stations away from Headquarters, certifying officers will have the necessary tool to ensure that funds are available before approving expenditures. Certifying officers would be able to monitor expenditures in "real time" as part of their normal budgetary monitoring and control responsibilities. The Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

34. In paragraph 24, the Board recommended that the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts take action to review trust funds whose purposes have long been attained in order to identify and close those that are inactive and no longer required.

35. This recommendation is being implemented on an ongoing basis. It must be emphasized, however, that the closure of trust funds is complex and can, at times, be hampered by delays in the receipt of specific instructions from donors or substantive offices, despite follow-up action. The Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

36. In paragraph 41, the Board recommended that the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) enforce the requirement for implementing partners to submit quarterly utilization reports within the required 30 days after the end of the quarter.

37. UNFIP, in consultation with the United Nations Foundation, has withheld funding when quarterly utilization reports have been delinquent. This option will be introduced in a more systematic and predictable form, following publication of an UNFIP procedural manual in 2001.

38. In addition, UNFIP has systematically impressed upon its implementing partners, both orally and in writing, the importance of timely submission of quarterly utilization reports, as a practice of benefit to all stakeholders. The agenda of the meetings of focal points on 28 November 2000 and 13 February 2001 provided for discussions of reporting requirements (both financial and progress reports). As a standard operating procedure since the end of 1999, notices of scheduled reporting requirements are sent to all implementing partners in advance of deadlines requesting timely submission of quarterly utilization reports; follow-up reminders are sent to offices that remain delinquent. The Executive Director, UNFIP, is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

39. In paragraph 49, the Board recommended that UNFIP closely monitor submission of the report on the status of project accomplishments by implementing partners.

40. On 14 July 2000, the UNFIP Director of Programmes informed heads of agencies of the revised schedule and detailed specifications on periodic and final progress reporting. As with quarterly utilization reports, reminders and follow-ups are standard operational procedures. UNFIP will follow up closely in 2001 to ensure that agreed reporting requirements are met. The meeting of focal points of 13 February 2001 took the first major step. The Executive Director, UNFIP, is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

41. In paragraph 53, the Board recommended that UNFIP include in project reports and documents clear information on planned and actual starting dates and project duration. The Board further recommended that UNFIP modify the periodic financial utilization and progress reports to include an assessment of the degree to which the goals of the project have been achieved in comparison with targets.

42. At the focal points meeting on 28 November 2000, in order to establish clear guidelines, it was agreed that "start date" would refer to the date when agencies receive cash transfers at their headquarters.

43. After the dissemination of a revised schedule for progress reporting requirements in July 2000, UNFIP discussed with focal points in November 2000 and in February 2001 the need for succinct mid-year progress reports attached to the quarterly utilization reports. It is anticipated that guidelines will be developed in the first half of 2001 and, considering the reporting changes introduced in July 2000, issued to implementing partners at the most appropriate time, in order to maximize the impact of the new measures. The concept was included in the draft project format requirements distributed to focal points in February 2001. The Executive Director, UNFIP, is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

44. In paragraph 70, the Board recommended that the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services take action to render invoices for interpretation services provided on a reimbursable basis in respect of 18 meetings held between January and June 1999. The Board further recommended that the Department establish a mechanism for prompt billing for all services supplied on a reimbursable basis.

45. Strenuous efforts were made in the past several months to recover costs for reimbursable interpretation services rendered during the period of January through June 1999. Of the amount deemed recoverable ($105,435), $75,970 was indeed recovered. The remainder ($29,465), for a variety of reasons beyond the control of the Department, could not be recovered. It should be noted, however, that procedures put in place on the advice of the Board of Auditors have meanwhile resulted in a considerably higher recovery rate. The Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

46. In paragraph 74, the Board recommended that the Administration: (a) strictly adhere to the credit limit set for each customer; and (b) regularly review customers' accounts receivable and take steps to recover long-outstanding balances.

47. The Department of Public Information has initiated the regular review of accounts. This activity is being undertaken in close cooperation with the Revenue Accounts Unit of Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, resulting in a complete review of all accounts every six months. As part of this review, credit limits are assessed and customer adherence to limits is monitored. In the case of overdue accounts, customers are being contacted in an effort to resolve outstanding problems or to request payment. As necessary, accounts are being put on hold until payments are received. With the installation of a new order system in Geneva, the ability to monitor accounts originating from that sales office will be further enhanced. The Interim Head, Department of Public Information, is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

48. In paragraph 108, the Board recommended that the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, in conjunction with the IMIS project team, promptly address the problem of the high rate of rejection of inter-office vouchers so as to reduce or eliminate the manual encoding into IMIS of inter-office transactions from offices away from Headquarters and to obtain the optimum benefit of automation.

49. The incidents of rejection of inter-office vouchers (IOV) processed through the IOV bridge have been declining steadily, as new offices implement IMIS Release 3. Currently, the United Nations Office at Nairobi is the only office for which the bridge is used, and usage of the bridge will be discontinued as soon as IMIS Release 3 is implemented at that duty station later this year.

50. An enhancement was introduced in late 2000 to facilitate the cross-walking of IOV entries received from other offices to IMIS general ledger accounts, contributing to the reduction of manual encoding of inter-office transactions. In addition, work is progressing on the enhancements to the inter-office voucher import process which will facilitate the processing of such transactions between IMIS sites. It is expected that this will be ready in the spring of 2001.

51. Efforts to process inter-office vouchers on a more timely basis are continuing. At 31 December 2000, the total debits declined from $14.03 million to $6.0 million and the credits from $3.77 million to $1.31 million. Copies of the IOV reconciliations are being sent to the offices away from Headquarters on a regular basis. The Assistant Secretaries-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts and for Central Support Services are responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

52. In paragraph 202, the Board recommended that the Office of Legal Affairs issue guidelines detailing the procedures for the selection of arbitrators and outside counsel to be included in the shortlist of potential candidates in order to enhance competitiveness and make the selection process more transparent.

53. As indicated above, the Legal Counsel issued an Instruction which is binding on all staff of the Office of Legal Affairs and therefore goes beyond the auditors' recommendation to establish guidelines. The Instruction provides for detailed procedures regarding the short-listing and selection of party-appointed arbitrators and for a clear separation of functions within the Office. The Instruction therefore intends to ensure that the selection process is transparent (also see

para. 19 above). The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

54. In paragraph 227, the Board recommended that the Office of Legal Affairs provide to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), during its review of resource requirements, a consolidated summary setting out information on arbitration and other claims cases, such as the nature of the case and the amounts claimed.

55. As stated in paragraph 61 of A/55/380, the Office of Legal Affairs has already taken measures to implement this recommendation. In addition, it has been informed of a request by the ACABQ that information on the status of arbitration cases be submitted to it at the beginning of February and September of each year, specifying the information to be contained in those reports. The Office will comply with this request. The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

56. In paragraph 245, the Board recommended that the Audit and Management Consulting Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services ensure that working papers have been completed and reviewed in accordance with applicable standards, including indexing and cross-referencing.

57. In addition to the steps taken by the Audit and Management Consulting Division to ensure that audit working papers have been completed, reviewed, indexed and cross-indexed in accordance with the applicable audit standards, the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services has requested the establishment of a trust fund to provide funding for a project for the automation of working papers and for other projects to enhance the information technology capabilities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in order to further strengthen the audit evidentiary process. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

58. In paragraph 271, the Board recommended that the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information comply with established procedures in the preparation of programme performance reports.

59. The Department of Political Affairs received the guidance of the Central Monitoring and Inspection Unit of the Office of Internal Oversight Services with regard to the interpretation of the procedures for the preparation of programme performance reports, in particular with respect to recurrent outputs. Accordingly, the Department of Political Affairs will henceforth report on the implementation of recurrent outputs in a manner that will reflect the exact count of outputs under a given activity, irrespective of the number of times the same activity may have occurred. The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

60. The Department of Public Information will continue to enhance its efforts in accordance with established procedures in the preparation of programme performance reports. In the same vein, the Department will ensure that subsequent reports will be as accurate as possible, with adequate explanation provided in cases of termination and reformulation.

61. In order to ensure the accuracy of its programme performance reporting, the Department completed the processing of the 2000-2001 inventory of outputs into the Web-based Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS), in close collaboration and in accordance with the guidance provided by the Central Monitoring and Inspection Unit of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

62. Following discussions with the Central Monitoring and Inspection Unit, the Department will continue to handle the programme performance reporting (including work-months) for the United Nations information centres (UNICs) at Headquarters, until a cost-effective mechanism is found to interface the internal reporting system currently used by its Information Centres Service (ICS) with IMDIS. The latter, which is technically supported by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, was recently made available on the Internet, to allow access by all duty stations, including UNICs.

63. It should be noted that, for several years, the UNICs have been providing programme performance data electronically to the Information Centres Service, which monitors their performance on an ongoing basis by means of a computer-based reporting system. This internally designed system is a crucial management tool for the Service and is also used to generate a

number of reports for the Department and for intergovernmental and oversight bodies. In close consultation with the Central Monitoring and Inspection Unit, it was concluded that the introduction of an additional reporting system in the field, such as IMDIS, at the current time, would lead to duplication, necessitate substantial training of UNIC staff, and detract from the already limited UNIC resources available for implementing programme activities. Nevertheless, the Department will intensify its efforts to determine, in collaboration with both the Central Monitoring and Inspection Unit and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, how its current internal system can interface with IMDIS so as to eliminate the need for manual conversion of data or for parallel reporting. The Interim Head, Department of Public Information, is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

64. In paragraph 276, the Board recommended that the Administration issue instructions to all departments to input planned work-months into IMDIS in order to enable management to monitor performance against planned work schedules.

65. This issue is under discussion. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

66. In paragraph 285, the Board recommended that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) establish norms for rental accommodation, as envisaged in the scheme of rental subsidy. The Board also recommended that certifying officers ensure that all claims for rental subsidy are supported by full and complete documentation, in order to determine the reasonableness of the claims.

67. The Working Group met on 14 February 2001 to review information relating to maximum rent levels in Bangkok. The Group studied the relationship of family size to size of accommodation in comparison to the equivalencies applying in New York as well as the actual pattern of accommodation in Bangkok from the records available from 1999. The Working Group also studied the rental data which had been provided by three commercial rental agencies at the end of 1999.

68. The Working Group completed its review of the data and recommended the following maximum rent levels by family size in Bangkok:

Staff member alone or with spouse	2/3 bedrooms	Baht 60,000
Plus one child	3 bedrooms	Baht 75,000
Plus two children	3/4 bedrooms	Baht 96,000
Plus three or more children	4 bedrooms	Baht 117,000

The recommendation of the Working Group has been implemented by the ESCAP Personnel Section in determining the reasonableness of the rent for rental subsidy purpose since March 2001. Certifying officers will require claims for rental subsidy to be supported by full documentation to determine the reasonableness of the claims. The Chief, Division of Administration, ESCAP, is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

69. In paragraph 289, the Board recommended that ESCAP request the lessees to adhere to their obligation to pay rent promptly to ESCAP, in accordance with the lease agreement, and that ESCAP in future consider including a penalty clause in the lease agreement/ contract for delays or for non-payment of rent.

70. A monitoring system has been instituted to ensure that there is no delay in following up on receipts at ESCAP. Inclusion of a penalty clause in the lease agreements/contracts for delays for non-payment of rent will be considered when new leases are negotiated. The Chief, Division of Administration, ESCAP, is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

71. In paragraph 295, the Board recommended that the Human Resources Management Service at the United Nations Office at Geneva encourage departments to facilitate staff continuity and recruitment by promptly notifying it of their recruitment plans.

72. The Human Resources Management Service is continuing its efforts to encourage and assist the departments to expedite the departmental review process and the preparation of their recommendations for the filling of vacancies, in particular those resulting from mandatory retirement. The Director, Division of Administration, United Nations Office at Geneva, is responsible for implementation of the recommendation.

73. In paragraph 298, the Board recommended that the United Nations Postal Administration ensure that memoranda of agreement or contracts are concluded

with all consignment agencies, so as to protect the interests of the Organization.

74. The United Nations Postal Administration (UNPA) is ensuring that contracts, memoranda of agreement or letters of understanding are concluded with all consignment agencies for commercial transactions. All data related to inactive agencies have been removed from accounts receivable in the computerized records of UNPA. As a consequence, any discrepancies have been reconciled and adjusted in the system. The Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services is responsible for implementation of this recommendation.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 5* (A/55/5), vol. I, chap. II.

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Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations

Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

1. Under the terms of Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, "Members of the United Nations which have or assume responsibilities for the administration of territories whose peoples have not yet attained a full measure of self-government" undertake to transmit regularly to the Secretary-General information "relating to economic, social and educational conditions in the territories for which they are respectively responsible other than those territories to which Chapters XII and XIII apply". In addition, the General Assembly, in several resolutions, the most recent of which was resolution 55/137 of 8 December 2000, requested the administering Powers concerned "to transmit or continue to transmit to the Secretary-General the information prescribed in Article 73 *e* of the Charter, as well as the fullest possible information on political and constitutional developments in the Territories concerned".

2. The table annexed to the present report shows the dates on which information called for under Article 73 *e* of the Charter was transmitted to the Secretary-General in respect of the years from 1999 to 2001.

3. The information transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter follows in general the standard form approved by the General Assembly and includes information on geography, history and population and economic, social and educational conditions. In the case of Territories under the administration of New Zealand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, the annual reports of the Territories also include information on constitutional matters. Additional information on political and constitutional developments on Tokelau is given by the representative of New Zealand during

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meetings of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Supplementary information is also made available by New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States concerning Territories under their administration.

4. In compliance with the provisions of paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 1970 (XVIII) of 16 December 1963 and other relevant resolutions of the Assembly, including in particular resolution 55/137, the Secretariat has continued to use the information transmitted in the preparation for the Special Committee of working papers on each Territory. The Special Committee has taken this information into account in formulating its decisions on these Territories, which are set forth in the relevant chapters of the Committee's report to the General Assembly at its current session (see A/56/23 (Part II)). The report also contains an account of the action taken by the Special Committee in implementation of resolution 1970 (XVIII) (ibid., chap. VIII).

Annex

Dates of transmission of information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations and period covered[a]

	Information received in 2000		*Information received in 2001*	
	Date of transmission	*Period covered*	*Date of transmission*	*Period covered*
France[b]				
New Caledonia[c]	-	-	-	-
New Zealand (1 July-30 June)[d]				
Tokelau	31 March 2000	July 1999-March 2000	23 February 2001	2000-2001
Portugal				
East Timor[e]	-	-	-	-
Spain				
Western Sahara[f]	-	-	-	-
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland				
Anguilla	9 May 2000	1997-1999	12 April 2001	1998-2003
Bermuda	3 May 2000	1997-2001	-	-
British Virgin Islands	9 May 2000	April 2000	25 April 2001	1998-2001
Cayman Islands	3 May 2000	1998	12 April 2001	1999
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)	5 May 2000	June 1998-July 1999	3 May 2001	2000-2001
Gibraltar	3 May 2000	1999	12 April 2001) 25 April 2001)	2000
Montserrat	-	-	25 April 2001	1999-2002
Pitcairn	9 May 2000	April 2000	-	-
Saint Helena	-	-	25 April 2001	2000-2003
Turks and Caicos Islands	8 May 2000	1998-2003	-	-
United States of America (1 October-30 September)[g]				
American Samoa	-	-	28 March 2001	2000-2005
Guam	-	-	31 March 2001	2000-2005
United States Virgin Islands	-	-	31 March 2001	2000-2005

[a] For a preliminary list of Territories to which the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960) applies, see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Eighteenth Session, Annexes*, addendum to agenda item 23 (A/54/46/Rev.1), annex I.

[b] The Government of France has not transmitted information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter, but it has made available to the Secretariat a report on the situation in New Caledonia in 2000.

[c] According to its resolution 41/41 A of 2 December 1986, the General Assembly "considers that, in the light of the provisions of Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV), New Caledonia is a Non-Self-Governing Territory within the meaning of the Charter".

[d] Period extends from 1 July of the year listed to 30 June of the following year.

[e] The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor established by Security Council resolution 1272 (1999) of 25 October 1999, is endowed with overall responsibility for the administration of East Timor until the Territory achieves independence.

[f] On 26 February 1976, the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations informed the Secretary-General that "the

Spanish Government, as of today, definitely terminates its presence in the Territory of the Sahara and deems it necessary to place the following on record: ... (a) Spain considers itself henceforth exempt from any responsibility of an international nature in connection with the administration of the said Territory, in view of the cessation of its participation in the temporary administration established for the Territory ..." (A/31/56-S/11997). For the printed text, see *Official Records of the Security Council, Thirty-first Year, Supplement for January, February and March 1976*.

[a] Period extends from 1 October of the previous year to 30 September of the year listed.

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Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/219, the present report describes the status of the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. It also reviews the current institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Strategy, on the basis of the experience during its first year of operation, and makes recommendations on the subject.

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I. Introduction

1. In resolution 54/219 of 22 December 1999, the General Assembly endorsed the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General to ensure functional continuity for the effective implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction as an international framework for responding to the challenge presented to the international community by the increasing incidence and scale of disasters which had resulted in massive losses of life and long-term negative, social, economic and environmental consequences for vulnerable countries worldwide, in particular in developing countries. The Assembly also endorsed the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish an inter-agency task force and an inter-agency secretariat for disaster reduction for an initial period covering the biennium 2000-2001, as the main instruments for the implementation of the Strategy.

2. In keeping with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 54/219, the present report reviews the status of the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. It also includes a review of the institutional arrangements after the first year of operation and makes appropriate recommendations on the subject.

II. Impact of natural and related environmental and technological disasters

3. Within recent years, the international community has witnessed the increased incidence of natural as well as related environmental and technological disasters. During the past four decades, a series of earthquakes, droughts, floods and volcanic eruptions have exacted a major toll in terms of the loss of human lives and the destruction of economic and social infrastructure. The past decade, in particular, witnessed an exponential growth in the occurrence of disasters. In 1999 alone, there were more than 700 large-scale disasters, resulting in the death of approximately 100,000 people and causing economic losses in excess of US$ 100 billion, which in fact reflects an annual increase of approximately 10 per cent during the decade of the 1990s. Extrapolating from this trend, it is projected that by the year 2065, the economic losses due to disasters are likely to account for a significant proportion of global gross domestic product (GDP). If the projections of the likely impact of climate change on the incidence of disasters, reflected in this year's report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), are factored into the equation, the loss, in terms of both human lives and the destruction of economic and social infrastructure, is likely to be even more significant without aggressive disaster reduction interventions.

4. Disasters are not confined to particular regions nor do they discriminate between developed and developing countries. The forest fires that raged for several weeks in the United States of America in 2000 and the devastation caused by floods in several parts of Europe, most notably in France, Italy, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, are telling reminders of the increased vulnerability of developed and developing countries alike to natural and related environmental and technological disasters.

5. Nevertheless, while all countries are susceptible to natural hazards, developing countries are much more severely affected, especially in terms of the loss of lives and the percentage of economic losses in relation to their gross national product (GNP). Various United Nations studies have shown that 90 per cent of disaster victims live in developing countries. According to the World Bank, losses caused by disasters in developing countries, in terms of percentage of GNP, are 20 times higher than those in developed countries. Within the past year or more, floods in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Venezuela and Viet Nam, volcanic eruptions in Indonesia, Montserrat and the Philippines, and earthquakes in El Salvador, Indonesia and India have created widespread destruction.

6. The catastrophic earthquakes that occurred earlier this year in El Salvador and India highlight key deficiencies in the approach to disaster management. The cause of the widespread loss of life and damage, a result of the occurrence of natural hazards, is linked to the increasing number of people and assets that are vulnerable to disasters. This is due to a number of factors, including the increased concentration of populations in the context of the accelerated pace of urbanization. Poverty, which often forces people to live in geographically unstable locations and in inadequate shelters, is also a major factor contributing to the creation of vulnerable communities. However, other factors such as inappropriate land-use planning, poorly designed buildings and infrastructure, and lack of

appropriate institutional arrangements to deal with risk reduction, not to mention an increasingly degraded environment, epitomized by widespread deforestation, are all linked to the current trend towards increased vulnerability.

7. Conscious human action and political will can nevertheless reduce the impact of future disasters. Solutions exist, and the knowledge and technology required to apply them are widely available. In the case of earthquakes, these solutions include proper land-use planning, aided by vulnerability mapping, to situate people in safe areas, and the adoption of proper building codes and plans reflecting local seismic risk assessment, as well as ensuring the control and enforcement of such plans and codes, based on economic and other incentives. Systematic awareness-raising campaigns, carried out with the active participation of the population, will encourage people to live in safer environments. In the case of natural hazards, such as hurricanes and floods, early warning systems, based on the application of improved scientific knowledge, can play an important role in reducing vulnerability.

8. The serious threat posed by disasters therefore requires a concerted effort by the international community to support creative disaster reduction initiatives.

III. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction: conceptual underpinnings

9. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction builds upon the experience of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-1999), which was launched by the General Assembly in 1989. The Strategy embodies the principles articulated in a number of major documents adopted during the Decade, including, in particular, the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action,[1] and the document entitled "A safer world in the twenty-first century: risk and disaster reduction",[2] both of which were endorsed at the Programme Forum on the International Decade held in Geneva from 5 to 9 July 1999, which also adopted the Geneva Mandate on Disaster Reduction.[3]

10. The Strategy reflects a major conceptual shift from the traditional emphasis on disaster response to disaster reduction, and in effect seeks to promote a "culture of prevention". The approach reflected in the Strategy is premised on an appreciation of the fact that the loss of life and destruction resulting from disasters are not inevitable and can be mitigated by reducing the vulnerability of communities to natural hazards. It recognizes that natural hazards in themselves do not inevitably lead to disasters, but disasters result from the impact of natural hazards on vulnerable social systems. In other words, natural disasters can be prevented through conscious human action designed to reduce vulnerability.

11. In order to appreciate more fully the feasibility of disaster reduction, it is necessary to distinguish between hazard, vulnerability and risk. Natural hazards comprise phenomena such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, tsunamis, tropical cyclones and hurricanes and other storms, tornadoes and high winds, river floods and coastal flooding, wildfires and associated haze, and drought and infestations. Vulnerability to disasters is a function of human action and behaviour. It describes the degree to which a socio-economic system is either susceptible or resilient with respect to the impact of natural hazards and related technological and environmental disasters. The degree of vulnerability is determined by a combination of several factors, including awareness of hazards, the condition of human settlements and infrastructure, public policy and administration, and organized abilities in all fields of disaster management. The risk of a disaster is the probability of a disaster's occurring, that is to say, the impact of a natural hazard on a socio-economic system with a given level of vulnerability. Consequently, risk management includes aspects of hazard awareness, vulnerability assessment, impact predictions and the formulation of appropriate countermeasures. These in turn include the mitigation of hazard impact and the reduction of vulnerability.

12. In the context of the conceptual elaboration of the Strategy, the relationship between disaster reduction and disaster prevention, terms that have tended to be used interchangeably, has been clarified. In the more restrictive sense of the term, disaster prevention may be seen as involving measures aimed at avoiding disasters, which is not always possible. On the other hand, disaster reduction, narrowly interpreted, implies that measures would be adopted to reduce or limit the

severity of the impact of disasters. However, in the broader sense of the expression, disaster reduction involves all measures designed to avoid or limit the adverse impact of natural hazards and related environmental and technological disasters. Viewed in these terms, disaster reduction includes disaster prevention and, as the title of the Strategy suggests, has emerged as the all-encompassing concept.

13. More generally, efforts are being made to effect a conceptual integration of disaster reduction into the philosophy of sustainable development in the context of the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This is necessary in view of the fact that, despite its importance, disaster reduction is not adequately reflected in existing development strategies.

IV. Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

A. Framework for action

14. Building upon the various foundation documents to which reference was made above, and taking account of the views expressed by the members of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction has elaborated a framework for action[4] for the implementation of the Strategy. The overall vision of the Strategy articulated in the framework document is to enable societies to become more resilient to the effects of natural hazards and related technological and environmental phenomena in order to reduce human, economic and social losses. In support of this vision, it identifies four main objectives to be pursued, namely: increasing public awareness; promoting commitment on the part of public authorities; stimulating interdisciplinary and intersectoral partnerships, and expanding risk reduction networking; and improving scientific knowledge of the causes of natural disasters and the effects of natural hazards and related technological and environmental disasters on societies. It also incorporates two separate activities mandated by the General Assembly in terms of the continuation of international cooperation to reduce the impact of El Niño and other climate variables, and the strengthening of disaster reduction capacities through the development of early warning systems.

15. Under the various objectives, specific issues are identified such as public information, education and training; natural resource management; the formulation of risk reduction strategies; the establishment of effective coordination mechanisms; the integration of disaster reduction in sustainable development; carrying out assessments of the socio-economic impact of disasters; the development of appropriate databases on disasters; the formulation of suitable coping strategies; the transfer of knowledge among countries; and the establishment of information exchange facilities. The framework document, which has been endorsed by the Inter-Agency Task Force, will serve as a broad programmatic guide for action in support of the objectives of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

B. Activities carried out in support of the Strategy

16. The Inter-Agency Task Force has succeeded in identifying a number of priority areas for action relevant to disaster reduction, including climate variability, early warning, vulnerability and risk as well as wild land fires. It has also sought to launch initiatives in these areas through its various working groups. Furthermore, at its first meeting in April 2000, the Inter-Agency Task Force identified several areas of focus for its work, including ecosystems management, land-use management and unplanned urban areas; advocacy, information, education and training; public awareness and commitment; raising political will and the profile of prevention; the social and health impact of disasters; capacity-building in developing countries; mainstreaming disaster reduction in sustainable development and in national planning; lessons learned for prevention from actual disasters; private and public sector partnerships; technological disasters; and the application of science and technology in disaster reduction.

17. During 2000, the inter-agency secretariat produced various studies and reports such as the Risk Assessment Tools for Diagnosis of Urban Areas against Seismic Disasters (RADIUS) methodology for seismic risk reduction strategies, and the report on the Usoi Landslide Dam and Lake Sarez in Tajikistan which provides a professional appraisal of the danger posed

by the lake to surrounding communities. The secretariat has also carried out a number of activities in respect of public awareness, based, among other things, on the annual disaster reduction campaign and the grant of the United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Prevention.

18. For the year 2001, the activities of the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction will include the preparation of a global report on disaster reduction initiatives in support of the Strategy. This report, which will be substantive in nature, will be issued on an annual basis and will provide the international community with an assessment of progress made worldwide in the implementation of the Strategy and also identify gaps at the policy and institutional levels that could be filled with the support of the United Nations organizations and agencies, as well as other relevant sectors of the disaster reduction community.

19. In the area of policy formulation and inter-agency coordination, emphasis will be placed on the provision of substantive inputs for the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force and the promotion of a coordinated approach to disaster reduction among the various agencies and organizations.

20. The secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction will also continue to elaborate and propagate methodologies in respect of seismic risk developed under the RADIUS initiative and seek to apply similar approaches to the assessment of vulnerability in the area of floods. Emphasis will also be placed on the identification and exchange of experience based on innovative approaches to disaster reduction. Agreed terminology on disaster reduction will be drafted in order to provide a common understanding of disaster reduction and related concepts.

21. In keeping with its mandate to craft the United Nations message on disaster reduction, the secretariat will engage in advocacy and public information through an expansion of its publication programme and on the basis of the organization of annual campaigns on disaster reduction. The theme of the 2001 campaign is "Countering Disasters: Targeting Vulnerability", with sub-themes focusing on the application of science and technology to disaster reduction; building disaster-resistant infrastructure; and mobilizing local communities in support of disaster reduction. In addition, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction web site and resource centre will be expanded in order to enable the secretariat to serve as a clearing house for information on disaster reduction activities. These activities are to be carried out with a view to sensitizing and involving Governments, local communities and regional entities in the adoption of specific measures in support of disaster reduction.

22. In keeping with its mandate to provide backstopping to the policy and advocacy functions of the national platforms for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the secretariat of the Strategy is elaborating a strategy for supporting the work of these entities, especially in developing countries that are susceptible to disasters. Special emphasis will also be placed on strengthening the regional outreach of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction by reinforcing the presence and the activities of the Strategy secretariat at the regional level. Based on the experience gained through the Strategy unit for Latin America and the Caribbean, efforts are being made to apply a similar approach in other regions of the world through collaboration with existing regional centres participating in the Strategy network. In addition, partnership and networking initiatives are being launched among key stakeholders in the disaster reduction community in an effort to further advance the objectives of the Strategy.

23. Building upon the experience of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, special attention is being given to the establishment of arrangements designed to strengthen the involvement of the scientific community in the elaboration of innovative approaches to disaster reduction, based on the recognition that the scientific community has played, and will continue to play, an active role in promoting initiatives in support of disaster reduction. As stated in the conclusions of the World Meteorological Organization/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (WMO/UNESCO) Sub-forum on Science and Technology in Support of Natural Disaster Reduction (Geneva, 6-8 July 1999), held in conjunction with the Decade Programme Forum in July 1999, to mark the conclusion of the Decade: "Though science and technology have already contributed much to saving human life and reducing property loss and environmental damage from most forms of natural hazard of meteorological, hydrological, oceanographic

and geological origin, their potential contribution over the next decade is even greater. But only if they are systematically and wisely applied within the broader social context of an integrated approach to natural disaster reduction which is the principal legacy and proudest achievement of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction".[5]

24. United Nations organizations have carried out active programmes in support of disaster reduction. United Nations organizations and agencies, such as the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), UNESCO, WMO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), have recently strengthened their disaster reduction capacity in their respective areas of competence.

25. The World Bank has focused on disaster reduction as an important element in the fight against poverty. In order to advance the goal of reducing the impact of disasters, advocated by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the World Bank has also sought to update its strategies and procedures in order to promote proactive ways to integrate disaster prevention and mitigation into its development work. Against this background, the Disaster Management Facility (DMF) was established in July 1998 to promote disaster risk management as a priority issue for poverty reduction. DMF has worked actively to ensure that risk analysis is integrated into project design, and that effective prevention and mitigation measures are included in the Bank's Country Assistance Strategies. The staff have been provided with training to equip them with the tools to design safer investments and empower communities to reduce their vulnerability to disasters. Furthermore, disaster risk management is being mainstreamed into the Bank's development efforts. Reconstruction projects, such as those carried out in the aftermath of the earthquake in Turkey, hurricane Mitch in Central America, and the January 2001 earthquake in Gujarat, India, have been designed to go beyond mere rebuilding and to focus on how to rebuild in a better way so as to strengthen resilience to future disasters. Along the same lines, pilot efforts of DMF are being scaled into Bank operations. A good example of the application of this approach occurred in Mexico where, following a DMF case study to assess the capacity of the country to manage disaster risk, the Government requested the Bank to prepare a project aimed at reducing disaster losses. The Bank is also working closely with its partners through the ProVention Consortium, which serves as an important mechanism through which the various partners combine efforts to generate evidence on the economic and financial impact of disasters on longer-term development; to develop methodologies and standards for conducting damage and needs assessments following a disaster; to strengthen communities' resilience to disaster impact; and to identify innovations in risk transfer and financing. The World Bank is a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction.

26. Throughout the year 2000, UNDP continued to support capacity-building in disaster reduction and management at regional, subregional and national levels through over 50 programmes ranging from strengthening of early warning in China, Viet Nam and Ethiopia to disaster management in the Caucasus, and institution-building in East Timor and Albania. Following recent major disasters such as those that occurred in Venezuela, Mozambique and India, UNDP used the opportunity to integrate disaster risk reduction considerations into its post-disaster recovery support to these countries. While contributing to the overall objectives of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction through its regular programmes, UNDP also undertook a number of activities that related to specific themes of the Strategy. Firstly, in the domain of public awareness and information, the first issue of the World Vulnerability Report, coordinated by the Disaster Reduction and Recovery Programme of UNDP, will be published at the end of 2001. Following an expert meeting on approaches to indexing disaster risk and vulnerability, the work on the disaster vulnerability index part of the report is in progress with the contribution of the UNEP Global Resource Information Database (GRID) programme. National vulnerability reports are also planned. In addition, UNDP prepared a disaster profile of the least developed countries as a publication and promoted greater attention to the impact from disasters on national and household economy and chronic poverty for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be held in May 2001. UNDP also prepared and presented an Executive Board paper on its strategy for disaster reduction and recovery which provides the framework for the vision, strategy and areas of action in this domain. Secondly, with a view to fostering commitment from public authorities, the UNDP

initiative entitled World Alliance of Cities Against Poverty (WACAP) and the Disaster Reduction and Recovery Programme (DRRP) worked in collaboration to raise awareness among the urban authorities of urban risk assessment and disaster mitigation. A conference to this end was attended by mayors from over 100 cities. An electronic network of local authorities on the subject is also planned. Thirdly, in the areas of partnership-building, especially in relation to regional capacity-building, UNDP has built partnerships with regional organizations such as the Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC), for the implementation of the UNDP regional programme on risk management in Central America; with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), concerning a Caribbean risk management initiative, which integrates disaster reduction and climate change concerns; with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to strengthen regional and national capacities in disaster management in the 12 countries of southern Africa; and with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency, for a Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI) for the countries of South-Eastern Europe, under the aegis of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. Furthermore, UNDP leads an inter-agency working group on disaster mitigation comprising WFP, the World Health Organization (WHO), FAO, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with the aim of developing principles and guidelines in order to incorporate disaster risk into the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). A guidelines and policy paper has been prepared and will be tested in selected countries.

27. In the framework of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, in which it participates as a member, UNDP leads the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Working Group on Risk, Vulnerability and Disaster Impact Assessment, which has been working on the development of guidelines for social impact assessment. Fourthly, in the area of training, UNDP coordinates a Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP) focusing on disaster reduction training for the five Central American countries. This initiative brings together all the national and regional partners for human resource development. In southern Africa, inter-agency training initiatives are under way in approximately 10 countries, complemented by a regional programme. At the local level, in order to improve awareness and contribute to the reduction of disaster impact on the poor in urban areas, UNDP has collaborated with IFRC in assessing urban disaster risks in Khartoum and Cape Town, and is developing a programme to strengthen the capacities of local communities to manage these risks. The Disaster Reduction and Recovery Programme of UNDP organized, in cooperation with the World Bank Disaster Management Facility, an international conference on the use of microfinance and microcredit for the poor in recovery and disaster reduction. Since then, a programme has been developed to elaborate financial instruments to enable the poor to manage disaster risks. In the area of environmental and technological disaster reduction, following the cyanide spill into the Lapus River in Romania, UNDP provided technical assistance on environmental assessment, contributed to improving early warning, developed environmental rehabilitation programmes and undertook training of the national and local authorities in managing future disasters.

28. FAO has provided increased assistance for developing disaster prevention programmes and preparedness plans. In this connection, the Strategic Framework for FAO 2000-2015[6] identifies disaster reduction as one of the important strategies to address the needs of member States with specific reference to the eradication of food insecurity and rural poverty. In seeking to reduce the vulnerability of agricultural production systems to disasters, FAO has provided technical assistance to its member States to strengthen their capacity to prevent or mitigate the impact of natural hazards. This assistance included the creation of shelter-belt plantations, forestation and forest management, watershed management, soil erosion control, crop diversification, community-based seed production, and the construction of drainage systems and flood-control dikes, as well as environmental information and database development and decision support tools for disaster monitoring, assessment and early warning. Furthermore, FAO has mobilized international support through its Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS). In 2001, the agency organized an international expert meeting on forest fire management in cooperation with the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO),

and is also planning to convene an Asia-Pacific conference on early warning, preparedness, prevention and management of disasters in food and agriculture, scheduled for 12-15 June in Thailand. FAO has also continued to provide an operational service on environmental information through an Advanced Real-Time Environmental Information Monitoring System (ARTEMIS) using satellite data. FAO is a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction.

29. In 1999, WFP identified disaster mitigation as one of the five priority areas in "Enabling Development", a key strategy document that outlines WFP's role in development. Disaster mitigation for WFP focuses on the reduction of the impact of natural hazards on the food security of vulnerable populations.[7] A steering committee for disaster mitigation has been set up to identify means to assist country and regional offices in integrating disaster mitigation activities into their development programming. WFP's dual mandate for both development and emergencies has resulted in the linking of development activities to facilitate eventual emergency response. This linkage reduces the impact of natural hazards on food-insecure populations. Guidelines on disaster mitigation have been prepared and technical assistance missions organized to seven pilot country offices. These missions field-tested the guidelines and helped country offices to design effective disaster mitigation strategies. The formalization of WFP's role in disaster mitigation is reflected in the new generation of programming documents. Nine of the 11 Country Strategy Outlines and Country Programmes that were approved by the Executive Board in 2000 included disaster mitigation activities and several more are expected in 2001. For example, in the Sudan, WFP will support water-harvesting to decrease the impact of drought on rural livelihoods and will also conduct contingency planning activities. In the United Republic of Tanzania, WFP's Country Programme will use food-for-work activities to create assets, such as grain stores and access roads, in order to improve long-term food security and at the same time decrease the vulnerability of households to drought. WFP is also a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction.

30. In respect of natural hazards and the mitigation of their effects, UNESCO has promoted activities aimed at developing a better scientific understanding of the occurrence and distribution of disasters in time and space. Other sectors in which UNESCO has been active are the development of educational material to raise public awareness and facilitate public information and the provision of technical advice on hazard-resistant construction of schools and the protection of cultural heritage. The Organization will also launch a programme devoted to natural disaster reduction during the biennium 2002-2003. UNESCO's scientific and technical contribution to disaster reduction has continued to be promoted under the Organization's natural hazards programmes in the earth sciences and has built on its five intergovernmental and international scientific programmes: the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP), the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme. The Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) hosted in IOC provides a framework within which to coordinate systematic observations of the world's oceans. Both the next medium-term strategy (2002-2007) and the programme and budget for 2002-2003, which will be approved by the UNESCO General Conference, are expected to include provisions for an interdisciplinary programme related to natural disaster reduction. In this context, UNESCO works closely with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat and other organizations and entities involved in advancing the objectives of the Strategy. It is also a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction.

31. As nearly three quarters of all natural disasters including floods, tropical cyclones, droughts, forest fires and epidemics are weather and climate-related, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has a number of programmes related to the mitigation of such disasters. WMO participated actively in the implementation of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction mainly through its scientific and technical programmes and with the participation of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) and a number of Regional Specialized Meteorological Centres (RSMCs) worldwide. WMO is a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, and supports the work of its working groups, in particular those on climate and disaster reduction (for which it has lead responsibility), on early warning and on vulnerability and risk assessment. WMO has also provided support and seconded a senior

staff member to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat. WMO's constituent bodies, including the Congress and the Executive Council, follow and provide guidance on the policy, scientific and technical aspects of the implementation of the Strategy's objectives at the regional and global levels.

32. The following specific programmes and activities have been carried out by WMO in support of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction objectives. The World Weather Watch (WWW) programme of WMO coordinates the preparation and distribution of weather, climate and hydrologic data, analyses and forecast products to all nations. These services provide, in the most cost-effective manner, high-quality forecasts, warnings, advisories and information in support of protection of life and property and for socio-economic development. WMO assists the NMHSs of its members in the implementation and operation of relevant new technologies, and in the coordination of their activities for ensuring timely availability of warnings and advisories for the public and the international community. In this respect, WMO ensures the tracking of dangerous weather phenomena of short duration using high-resolution limited area modelling and the prediction of other extreme weather and hydrologic events several days in advance through extended range weather forecasts using numerical weather prediction models. The WMO Tropical Cyclone Programme promotes the establishment of national and regionally coordinated systems to ensure advance and effective preparedness so that the loss of life and damage caused by tropical cyclones and associated phenomena are reduced to a minimum. The programme ensures capacity-building, and promotes the continuing development of Tropical Cyclone Regional Specialized Meteorological Centres (TCRSMCs) in the tropical cyclone basins around the world. To assess the value of a centralized global source of warning information issued by NMHSs, WMO has initiated a pilot project to demonstrate the viability of a trial web site. The project is being developed and tested as a site for tropical cyclones in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)/WMO Typhoon Committee region, with a view to its early implementation. The success of the project would lead to the long-term development of the concept to cater for other major weather hazards globally. WMO has designated eight RSMCs to provide atmospheric transport model products for environmental emergency response covering the globe. The aim is to provide modelling products and services for environmental emergencies related to nuclear facility accidents and radiologic emergencies. Such products have proved to be most useful for forest fires, as was the case with the smoke and haze in South-East Asia in 1997-1998. These products are also applicable to incidents of airborne plumes of volcanic ash and accidental gaseous chemical releases.

33. WMO's Public Weather Services (PWS) programme supports NMHSs in disaster reduction planning by providing a variety of routine forecasts and information to enhance the social and economic well-being of nations. A core component of the programme centres on ensuring the safety of life and property, one of the primary responsibilities of Governments. For this purpose, the programme focuses on: capacity-building to strengthen members' forecasting and warning capacity; transfer of knowledge and technology; and improving relationships and coordination with the disaster management community, government agencies and media concerned with public awareness, education and training.

34. The World Climate Programme (WCP) provides an authoritative international scientific voice on climate, climate variations and climate change. WCP assists countries in the application of climate information and knowledge to national sustainable development, including prediction and early warnings of climate-related natural disasters. WCP facilitates the effective collection and management of climate data and the monitoring of the global climate system, including the detection and assessment of climate variability and changes. WCP contributes to the assessment of the impacts of climate variability and changes that could markedly affect ecosystems and economic and social activities. WCP also provides the framework for research aimed at improving the understanding of climate processes for determining the predictability of climate. The Climate Information and Prediction Services (CLIPS) project within WCP has been designed to assist countries in using past climate data in sectors such as disaster preparedness, water resources management and protection of human health. The Climate Computing (CLICOM) project, another initiative of WCP, has provided advanced climate database management systems to many countries, with applications in several areas of disaster mitigation, especially drought.

35. WMO continues to assist its members in the development of techniques for assessment and combat of drought and desertification and other extreme events through its agricultural meteorology programme. Through its leadership of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Working Group on El Niño, La Niña, Climate Change and Variability, WMO will contribute significantly to the review of sectoral systems, both within and outside the United Nations system, that monitor climate-sensitive emergencies. Of particular interest is the monitoring and prediction of climate-related natural disasters associated with El Niño and La Niña phenomena. In this regard, WMO is well placed to coordinate the assessment of impacts by United Nations agencies and other bodies during the next El Niño event. Special efforts are under way, for example, to make seasonal to inter-annual climate forecasts available by a variety of means through National Meteorological Services (NMSs). The World Weather Research Programme (WWRP) is aimed at developing improved and cost-effective techniques for forecasting high-impact weather, and at promoting their applications among countries. WWRP projects are aimed at improving extreme events prediction on all space and time scales with particular emphasis on applications and socio-economic impacts. These projects are directed at critical weather events that could be life threatening or that could have serious economic consequences. They include, for example, orographically influenced intense precipitation, land-falling tropical cyclones, aircraft in-flight icing, sand and dust storms, and warm season heavy rainfall that is conducive to severe flooding.

36. The Hydrology and Water Resources Programme (HWRP) continues to assist the National Hydrological Services of member countries to assess the risk of and forecast water-related hazards, in particular major floods and droughts. This requires the collection and processing of basic data on such elements as precipitation, stream flow and surface-water and groundwater levels, in addition to the installation of hydrologic forecasting systems. WMO continues to facilitate the exchange of technology between countries in support of these efforts. It is also collaborating with other United Nations system organizations and non-governmental organizations. In particular, a new initiative of the Global Water Partnership calls on WMO to assume responsibility for a range of activities designed to develop a broad approach to flooding, incorporating social and economic as well as geophysical and technical aspects. This will be an essential part of integrated water resources management. To enable the WMO secretariat to act quickly and effectively in support of members in situations of emergency and disaster, an Emergency and Disaster Response Group (EDRG) has been established within the WMO secretariat. One purpose of the Group is to assist in the rehabilitation of meteorological and hydrologic infrastructure in member countries following a disaster. The most urgent needs and requirements of NMHSs are determined through visits, as necessary, while the medium- and long-term requirements are met through the preparation of priority project plans and through the coordination of support offered by cooperation partners.

37. The United Nations University (UNU) has focused its activities in support of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction goals in three main areas: firstly, the social aspects of urban vulnerability, on which a UNU initiative has been designed with a view to producing and disseminating methodologies for the analysis of urban social vulnerability; secondly, disaster information and technologies, activities concerning which have been carried out in partnership with the University of Tokyo's International Centre for Disaster Mitigation Engineering (INCEDE); and thirdly, enhanced preparedness for climate-related disasters, which has always been a high priority area for the University. A number of initiatives developed over the years to address these important global issues have made a significant contribution by linking the scientific community and the United Nations system. One particular example is the study on the El Niño phenomenon, which was carried out as a joint project between UNU, UNEP, the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) (Boulder, Colorado, United States), WMO and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat. This activity, which included the work of multidisciplinary teams in 16 countries, led to findings that have been crucial to improving preparedness for the next El Niño occurrence and other climate-related disasters. As a follow-up to the El Niño project, UNU has developed a new Climate Affairs Programme, which will encompass a broad spectrum of issues ranging from ethics and policy formulation to the impact of climatic phenomena. An important contribution of this initiative will be the development of multidisciplinary "Climate Affairs" educational programmes, which should ultimately prove to be beneficial for capacity-building

for disaster reduction. Finally, UNU together with the University of Geneva and the Federal School of Lausanne has provided fellowships to postgraduate students from developing countries to attend the international course in analysis and management of geologic risk. UNU also participates in the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction as a member of the Working Group on El Niño, La Niña, Climate Change and Variability.

38. UNEP has carried out a number of activities aimed at reducing the impact of natural and other related environmental and technological disasters in furtherance of the objectives of the Strategy. The UNEP Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL) programme is a tool for disaster prevention and preparedness which has contributed to raising public awareness of the need for emergency preparedness and the prevention and reduction of environmental emergencies and damage. UNEP has been particularly active in assessing lessons learned from several disasters between 1999 and 2000 in various countries including China, where UNEP flood mitigation activities have been strengthened in cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat); in Venezuela, where a joint project with the Government of Venezuela on vulnerability assessment and risk mapping is being implemented; and in Mozambique and Kenya. In an effort to strengthen national capacities and promote technical cooperation in floods mitigation and management among South Asian countries, UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) developed a joint project on "Mitigation, Management and Control of Floods in South Asia". Two technical meetings were held in 2000 with the participation of experts and government officials from Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal and Viet Nam. In the aftermath of recent natural disasters in Venezuela, Mozambique and Kenya, UNEP organized impact assessment missions which also made recommendations on preparedness and prevention aspects. Similarly, UNEP participated in a joint mission to Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia following the cyanide spill that affected these countries. UNEP is a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction and chairs its Working Group on Early Warning.

39. The establishment of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction coincided with the consolidation of the process of restructuring carried out by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). A key component of this process was the creation of the Disaster Management Programme (DMP) and the launch of a specialized Risk and Disaster Management Unit to cater for an increasing demand from member countries for technical support, normative and policy tools, and field operational capacity concerning disaster prevention, mitigation and post-disaster rehabilitation in human settlements. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) disaster-related activities focus in particular on the physical and management components of shelter, infrastructure and service, with priority given to activities at the local level. As a result of the above, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has become an active partner of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, especially in the areas of land and urban management, impact assessment and capacity-building. Processes such as the "Campaign for Good Urban Governance" and the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) constitute important opportunities to promote disaster reduction in urban areas and strengthen collaboration with local authorities.

40. The Office for Outer Space Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat has increased its activities in the field of space applications for disaster reduction. The Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) called, among other things, for the implementation of an integrated, global system, especially through international cooperation, to manage natural disaster mitigation, relief and prevention efforts, especially of an international nature, through Earth observation, communications and other space-based services.[8] The Office for Outer Space Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat has also cooperated with the Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the Disaster Management Support Group of the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites and other organizations to achieve the following objectives: (a) to increase the awareness of managers and decision makers involved in disaster management of the potential benefits and the cost-effectiveness of using space technologies;

(b) to determine the types of information and communications needed for managing specific disasters and the extent to which they could be met by space technologies; and (c) to develop a blueprint of action that could lead in the near future to pilot projects incorporating and testing the use of space tools in disaster management. In this connection, the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is organizing a series of international workshops on the use of space technology in support of disaster reduction and emergency management that could lead to the launching of pilot projects in which interested national institutions responsible for disaster management could incorporate and test the use of space technologies. The first workshop was held in November 2000, for the benefit of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, with the substantive participation of the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Finally, the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the secretariat of the Strategy have concluded an exchange of letters in 2000 formalizing the terms of their inter-agency cooperation on space applications for disaster reduction.

41. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has continued to carry out activities to reduce the impact of natural and other related environmental and technological disasters in the Americas and the Caribbean. In disaster preparedness and mitigation, the following activities have been undertaken: (a) in the area of institutional strengthening, PAHO has supported the creation and enhancement of disaster programmes in the ministries of health and has promoted coordination with other sectors involved in disaster reduction; and (b) in the area of training, several hundred courses and workshops have been organized on all aspects of disaster management, which each year have benefited thousands of professionals dealing with disaster reduction. In addition, PAHO encourages universities throughout the region to incorporate disaster management in their formal curriculum. The preparation and distribution of training material have been a cornerstone of the programme. Over the last two decades this effort has produced a considerable body of technical material (publications, slides and video programmes). Print copies are distributed free of charge to institutions dealing with disaster mitigation in the member countries and electronic copies are also made available on the Internet for worldwide access. PAHO works at the highest level in the member countries to ensure that disaster mitigation becomes an integral part of national disaster reduction programmes. Even if these measures cannot stop disasters from occurring, they can reduce their impact. When a disaster strikes, PAHO works with the affected country to identify and assess needs and damages in the health sector, including water and sanitation systems. In this context, PAHO records and publishes the most important lessons learned in order to improve disaster management in the future. PAHO recently signed a Letter of Understanding with the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in which both parties agreed on a number of measures to strengthen cooperation in priority areas for the region, such as the publication of studies, joint lessons learned exercises, inter-agency reviews, and the strengthening of the regional multi-organization consortium formed by the Strategy, PAHO/WHO, CEPREDENAC, IFRC, Médecins sans frontières (MSF) and the Costa Rica National Commission for Disaster Prevention and Emergency Management (CNE). Furthermore, PAHO, in collaboration with the Strategy, is working on the implementation of a development plan for the Regional Disaster Information Centre, Latin America and the Caribbean (CRID) in San José, Costa Rica. While PAHO is the main technical, administrative and financial supporter of CRID, the Strategy provides financial and coordination support, and CNE provides the physical space to accommodate the operation. PAHO and the Strategy have also agreed to increase the access to disaster information, exchange and networking among countries and organizations in the region, through the joint support of CRID, ISDR and PAHO to the national and subregional disaster information networks, including the Caribbean Disaster Information Network (CARDIN).

42. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has continued to play an active role in disaster reduction, concentrating especially on the socio-economic impact of natural and other related hazards. In this context, ECLAC has organized a series of assessment studies on the impact of natural disasters in the region, including the 1999 floods and landslides in Venezuela, the earthquakes in Colombia (1999) and El Salvador (2001), as well as hurricanes Georges and Mitch (1998) and Keith (2000). ECLAC has also developed and disseminated its methodology on the impact of natural disasters both through printed publications in English and Spanish,

and in electronic form on the Internet. This methodology is being updated to include an environmental impact analysis, a gender perspective and a more complete analysis of the macroeconomic impact of disasters and its effect on reconstruction plans. ECLAC is also developing indicators of vulnerability and risk, in terms both of scientific analysis and the measurement of natural phenomena and of their economic and social impact. Finally, the Commission, through its regional office for the Caribbean, has implemented training programmes for small island developing States that are vulnerable to hurricanes.

43. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has continued its efforts to promote capacity-building in developing countries and to mainstream disaster reduction in sustainable development. In this context, ESCAP has concentrated on water-related disasters, especially floods, undertaking a wide array of activities. Such activities include the organization of seminars and training courses for flood control and management, a regional overview of experiences in water-related disaster management in Asia, and a regional project for "strengthening capacity in participatory planning and management for flood mitigation and preparedness in large river basins". In addition, ESCAP, in cooperation with WMO, provided assistance in carrying out a regional survey, which served as a basis upon which to strengthen regional cooperation in flood forecasting and disaster prevention and preparedness. Similarly, the Commission has provided advisory services to the secretariat of the Mekong River Commission on the formulation of the regional strategy for flood management and mitigation.

44. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is an autonomous body within the United Nations with the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations through appropriate training and research. UNITAR has a positive record in providing effective and timely training and project services for policy and institutional development in the areas of chemicals and waste management, climate change, biodiversity, land degradation, environmental law, environmental negotiations, reconstruction, information systems and local authorities. Some of the recent activities carried out by UNITAR in relation to disaster reduction include the launching of the International Training Centre for Local Actors (CIFAL). CIFAL is a programme, carried out in cooperation with several United Nations organizations, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, universities and the private sector, that constitutes a service structure, an international space for meetings and exchange of experiences, and a working system open to all actors in the field of sustainable social and human development and international cooperation. UNITAR recognizes that geographical information systems and new information and communication technologies (ICT) are essential tools for disaster reduction. For this reason, since 1986, UNITAR has organized more than 100 training sessions in these fields. Between 1999 and 2001, UNITAR has also organized several activities related to disaster reduction including: a dozen training sessions in Africa for national civil servants in the field of land degradation; 10 training workshops for local authorities in Lebanon and Crimea; and sensitization workshops in Kinshasa and southern Caucasus countries for national decision makers in the field of information systems for prevention and disaster reduction. In addition, UNITAR is ready to collaborate with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat to elaborate a specific Strategy training programme for disaster reduction, based on a joint assessment of activities to be carried out by the Strategy secretariat together with its different partners. In this context, UNITAR is willing to establish, within the CIFAL programme, a strong disaster reduction training component for local authorities. Given its long experience in this area, UNITAR is also willing to launch a specific training programme on information systems for disaster reduction. The training programme could focus on developing a specific database based on the harmonization of the collection, processing and analysis of the required data, the establishment of specific modelling and early warning systems, and the strengthening of local capacities.

45. The International Civil Defence Organisation (ICDO) has been actively involved in the promotion of activities relevant to disaster reduction. In October 2000, it convened an international conference which adopted a declaration entitled "Civil Defence for Sustainable Development". It has also prepared a Civil Defence International Directory, 2001, which provides information on the institutional arrangements in place in more than 100 countries for managing disasters and emergencies.

V. Institutional arrangements

46. As mentioned earlier in the report, the Inter-Agency Task Force and the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction have been established as the main mechanisms for the implementation of the Strategy. These institutional arrangements, which were established by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/219, serve as the hub of an extensive global network in support of disaster reduction, based on the mobilization of the capacities of the various United Nations agencies, the scientific community, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in the Strategy community.

A. Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction

47. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/219 and following the recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/497) on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction: successor arrangements, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction was established in early 2001 as the main forum within the United Nations system for devising strategies and policies for the reduction of natural hazards; for identifying gaps in disaster reduction policies and programmes and recommending remedial action; for ensuring complementarity of action by agencies involved in disaster reduction; for providing policy guidance to the Secretariat; and for convening meetings of experts on issues related to disaster reduction.

48. The Inter-Agency Task Force comprises eight representatives of organizations and entities of the United Nations system, six representatives of regional entities and eight representatives of civil society and non-governmental organizations. It therefore constitutes an innovative tripartite coalition among these entities. The present composition of the Inter-Agency Task Force, which is chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, is shown in the annex to this report.

49. Since its inception, the Inter-Agency Task Force has held three meetings — in April and October 2000 and in May 2001. Although much time was spent at the first meeting in seeking to clarify the mandate and functions of the Inter-Agency Task Force and its relationship with the Strategy secretariat, the deliberations at its subsequent meetings have been constructive and have served to identify a number of priority issues in disaster reduction to be addressed by the international community. In carrying out its activities, the Inter-Agency Task Force has established four Working Groups. Working Group 1, which is led by WMO, deals with climate and disasters; Working Group 2, led by UNEP, focuses on early warning; Working Group 3, led by UNDP, deals with risk vulnerability and impact assessment. Working Group 4, which was established at the second meeting of the Task Force, is led by the Global Fire Monitoring Centre (GFMC) located in Freiburg, Germany, and deals with wild land fires.

50. A review of the operation of the working groups suggests that start-up activities in terms of the identification of their membership, agreement on their work programme and the determination of the substantive issues to be addressed required considerable effort on the part of the lead agencies. Moreover, the convening of meetings has been constrained by the lack of resources to fund, among other things, the participation of members of the working groups, particularly from institutions in developing countries. Fortunately, one donor has recently indicated its interest in providing resources to facilitate participation in meetings of the various working groups. This should lead to an improvement in the functioning of the working groups.

51. It should also be pointed out that in carrying out their activities, the working groups have established varying types of working relations with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat. The secretariat has established focal points to provide backstopping for the activities of the working groups. There is growing recognition that all working groups could benefit from even closer contact with the Strategy secretariat and therefore increased emphasis will be placed on further strengthening this relationship in the future.

52. In terms of the composition of the Inter-Agency Task Force, as set out in paragraph 22 of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/497), it was agreed that the membership of the Inter-Agency Task Force would be rotated on a biennial basis, taking account of both the "continuity of work" and the need to ensure "the uninterrupted participation of relevant key sectors of the United Nations system". The initial decision to

limit United Nations organizations and agencies to eight members on the Inter-Agency Task Force has resulted in the exclusion from its membership of a number of key organizations and agencies that play an active role in disaster reduction. It is proposed, therefore, that in order to ensure the inclusion of all "key sectors" of the United Nations system, the number of this category of members of the Task Force should be expanded to a maximum of 14. In addition, other United Nations organizations and agencies that are not formally designated as members of the Inter-Agency Task Force but that are interested in participating in its meetings, will continue to be eligible to participate on an invitational basis. Moreover, the key United Nations organizations and agencies selected to participate as members of the Inter-Agency Task Force will not be subject to rotation in view of the fact that such organizations, unlike regional entities, civil society and non-governmental organizations, have global mandates for disaster reduction and would therefore need to be engaged on an ongoing basis in promoting the objectives of the Strategy. This will involve a modification of the original formula for determining the composition of the Inter-Agency Task Force, which also envisaged the biennial rotation among all membership categories. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) will continue to select the United Nations agencies that are to participate in the Inter-Agency Task Force on the basis of an expanded representation of these institutions in the Inter-Agency Task Force.

53. Nevertheless, given the large number of regional and civil society organizations, the participation of these entities should be rotated biennially, beginning on 1 January 2002, on a basis that would affect half of the members in each of these two categories. In keeping with the procedure set out in the Secretary-General's report (A/54/497), the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs will continue to designate the representatives of regional institutions. He will also assume responsibility for the designation of the representatives of civil society and non-governmental organizations, in view of the fact that the Scientific and Technical Committee of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, which had been assigned this responsibility for the initial selection of these bodies, ceased to exist at the end of the Decade. Moreover, in order to facilitate the participation of regional organizations in the Inter-Agency Task Force, the number of their representatives will be increased to a maximum of eight. In identifying regional organizations to participate in the Inter-Agency Task Force, special emphasis will be placed on the selection of regional organizations established by Governments which will comprise at least half of the members of the Inter-Agency Task Force falling within this category.

B. Inter-agency secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

54. Pursuant to the proposal contained in paragraph 21 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/136-E/1999/89) on recommendations on institutional arrangements for disaster reduction activities of the United Nations system after the conclusion of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/219, the inter-agency secretariat was established effective 1 January 2000 to carry out the following functions: to serve as the focal point within the United Nations system for the coordination of strategies and programmes for natural disaster reduction, and to ensure synergy between disaster reduction strategies and those in the socio-economic and humanitarian fields; to support the Inter-Agency Task Force in the development of policies on natural disaster reduction; to promote a worldwide culture of reduction of the negative effects of natural hazards, through advocacy campaigns; to serve as an international clearing house for the dissemination and exchange of information and knowledge on disaster reduction strategies; and to backstop the policy and advocacy activities of national committees for natural disaster reduction. In carrying out these functions, the secretariat has adopted a cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach to its work in recognition of the cross-cutting nature of disaster reduction initiatives. It has also continued to pay close attention to regional approaches, although, because of financial constraints, it has not been able to establish outreaches in other regions along the lines of the arrangements that exist for Latin America and the Caribbean. The secretariat has formulated, however, a proposal for the establishment of a regional outreach in Africa to be based in an existing institution for which funding is expected to be provided by an interested donor. Similar proposals are being elaborated for Asia and the Pacific.

55. As set out in the report of the Secretary-General (A/54/497, annex), the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat, which is headed by a Director who reports directly to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, comprises 14 core staff members. In addition, provision is made for the recruitment of a limited number of additional staff to carry out specific initiatives, subject to the availability of funds. Furthermore, WMO has seconded to the secretariat, on a non-reimbursable basis, a senior expert in meteorology. Other agencies are urged to follow the example set by WMO by seconding experts to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat in order to further strengthen its substantive technical capacity, this being necessary if the secretariat is to continue to respond effectively to the increased challenges presented by disasters and also to reinforce its inter-agency character.

56. The experience of the first year of its operation suggests that the current staffing is adequate for carrying out the tasks assigned to the secretariat. It is clear that the year 2000, which represented a transition from the previous International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction arrangements, presented a number of major challenges as the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat sought to clarify the precise nature of its relationship with the Inter-Agency Task Force in terms of their respective mandates. Moreover, the Strategy secretariat was engaged in the important task of ensuring the conceptual development of the Strategy and also in elaborating a programmatic framework for facilitating its implementation.

57. Based on the forging of a collaborative relationship between the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat and the various United Nations organizations and agencies as well as Governments and other members of the disaster reduction community, the second and the third meetings of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, held in October 2000 and May 2001, respectively, proved extremely constructive and succeeded in identifying a number of priority issues to be addressed in advancing the objectives of the Strategy.

58. Paragraph 28 of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/497) had stipulated, inter alia, that the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat would function during the initial two-year experimental period "as a flexible and evolving structure" and "would be reviewed in a process that would start after the first year of operation". In keeping with this provision, based on the review of the experience of the functioning of the Strategy secretariat, the Secretary-General recommends that it should continue to serve as an effective instrument for responding to the challenges posed by the increased incidence and scale of disasters, which, as indicated earlier, pose a major threat to the planet.

59. In keeping with paragraph 29 of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/497) and paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 54/219, it was agreed that the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat should be funded on an extrabudgetary basis and that the previous Trust Fund for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction should be renamed as the Trust Fund for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction for the purpose of receiving voluntary contributions in support of the activities carried out by the secretariat. Since its inception, the Trust Fund has received contributions amounting to US$ 2.2 million for the biennium 2000-2001, which were provided by eight main donors, namely, Canada, Denmark, Italy, Japan, Norway, South Africa, Sweden and Switzerland. More recently, the secretariat has also received a contribution from the Philippines. However, despite the generous contributions provided by these donors, the funding of the Strategy secretariat remains inadequate. Consequently, donors are urged to increase their contributions to the Strategy secretariat, particularly since the amounts contributed to disaster reduction by the international community remain relatively modest.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

60. The above-mentioned analysis suggests that disasters continue to pose a major challenge to the international community, and that both the Inter-Agency Task Force and the inter-agency secretariat, endorsed by General Assembly resolution 54/219, have played an important role in enabling the international community to respond effectively to this challenge.

61. Based on this review, which has been carried out in keeping with the provisions of paragraphs 4 and 13 of the above-mentioned resolution, the Secretary-General wishes to make the following recommendations.

A. Substantive issues

62. The international community should continue to give priority attention to the promotion of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction as a common platform for responding to the challenges presented by the increased incidence and scale of disasters.

63. The framework for action, prepared by the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and endorsed by the Inter-Agency Task Force, should serve as the basic guide for the implementation of the Strategy.

64. Governments are requested to support the promotion of national platforms or focal points for disaster reduction.

65. Donors should increase their contributions in support of disaster reduction activities as an investment in protecting lives and avoiding catastrophic economic losses resulting from the destruction of physical assets.

66. The Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly should launch a 10-year review of the implementation of the outcome of the Yokohama World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction preparatory process beginning in 2002 in order to ensure that a comprehensive assessment is made of progress in disaster reduction with a view to identifying ways of further strengthening the efforts of the international community in support of this objective.

B. Institutional arrangements

1. Inter-Agency Task Force

67. The Inter-Agency Task Force should continue to serve as the main forum for the formulation of policies on disaster reduction and perform the functions assigned to it in paragraph 15 of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/497).

68. The formula for constituting the Inter-Agency Task Force should be modified in order to provide for increased participation of regional organizations as well as ensure the continued membership of the "key United Nations agencies", which, by virtue of their global mandates and their active role in disaster reduction, should continue to be involved on an ongoing basis in the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force. In this regard, the key strategic agencies that are to participate in the Inter-Agency Task Force, whose number should be increased from 8 to a maximum of 14, should be identified by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). Similarly, the number of regional organizations should be increased to a maximum of eight. One half of the members representing regional institutions and the non-governmental organization community should be rotated on a biennial basis, beginning January 2002. The participants in the Inter-Agency Task Force falling within these latter two categories should be selected by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs following consultations with Governments and a representative member of regional organizations and civil society and non-governmental organizations.

2. Inter-agency secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

69. The secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, which should have established posts, should continue to carry out the functions set out in paragraph 25 of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/497).

70. The secretariat should continue to function as a separate entity reporting directly to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

71. The secretariat should continue to maintain the staff complement set out in the annex to the Secretary-General's report (A/54/497), subject to any modifications that may be made in future to respond to the changing nature of the challenges to be addressed in the field of disaster reduction.

72. United Nations organizations and agencies should make a special effort to second technical staff to the secretariat with a view to further strengthening the substantive capacity of the secretariat.

73. The secretariat should continue to expand its regional outreach in order to propagate the message of disaster reduction, with special attention to the needs of Africa.

74. The secretariat should continue to promote increased public awareness of the importance of disaster reduction through, among other things, the organization of the annual campaigns on disaster reduction.

75. The secretariat should prepare annual reports on progress made by the United Nations system in advancing the goals of the Strategy and present them to the General Assembly through the appropriate channels.

76. The secretariat should also take the initiative to organize meetings of an informal contact group of permanent missions in Geneva in order to ensure an action-oriented dialogue with Governments on disaster reduction.

77. Donors are urged to increase their contributions to the Trust Fund for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in order to provide an optimal level of funding for the secretariat and its activities.

C. General

78. Apart from the annual reports to be submitted to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General also intends to submit a comprehensive report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present report to the Assembly at its sixty-first session through the Council as a basis for determining what modifications, if any, may be necessary in the Strategy, taking into account the recommendations emanating from the proposed 10-year review of the Yokohama conference process.

Notes

[1] A/CONF.172/9, resolution 1, annex I.

[2] Available at <http://www.unisdr.org/unisdr/safer.htm>. Accessed on 11 May 2001.

[3] Available at <http://www.unisdr.org/unisdr/forum/mandate.htm>. Accessed on 11 May 2001.

[4] Third draft (March 2001) available at <http://www.unisdr.org/unisdr/framework.htm>. Accessed on 11 May 2001.

[5] Available at <http://www.unisdr.org/unisdr/forum/wmoconc.htm>. Accessed on 14 May 2001.

[6] Available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x3550e/x3550e00.htm>. Accessed on 14 May 2001.

[7] Available at <http://www.wfp.org/info/POLICY/Faad3/FAAD3-912ePDF>, paras. 89-93. Accessed on 14 May 2001.

[8] See A/CONF.184/6, chap. I, resolution 1, sect. I, para. 1 (b) (ii).

Annex

Inter-Agency Task Force membership, 2000-2001

Chair (ex officio) — Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

Secretary (ex officio) — Director of the Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

United Nations system agencies

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

International Telecommunication Union

World Meteorological Organization

United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Environment Programme

World Food Programme

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)

Regional entities

Council of Europe

Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre

Organization of African Unity

Organization of American States/Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction

South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission

Commonwealth of Independent States Inter-State Council

Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM of Russia)

Civil society and non-governmental organization representatives

Ms. Maritta Koch-Weser
Former Director-General, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources — World Conservation Union (IUCN)
Gland, Switzerland

Ms. Eva von Oelreich
Director, Disaster Preparedness Department
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
Geneva, Switzerland

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